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June 1, 2010

The Honorable Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Genachowski:


On May 28, 2010, Representative Sam Graves and Representative Betsy Markey sent a letter to your office signed by 38 Members of Congress regarding the recently submitted *Connecting America: The National Broadband Plan*. I write today to associate myself with the sentiment of my rural colleagues regarding the National Broadband Plan (NBP) as outlined in that letter.

As you likely know, Wyoming is the least populated state in the country. It is also the tenth largest by land mass. That kind of population density presents unique and exceedingly difficult challenges for meeting Wyoming's communications needs. At a time when the United States was just beginning to realize the promise of voice service, it could have been the country's policy to simply leave difficult areas like Wyoming behind. Instead, we collectively decided that it would be in our national interest to bring every area along. The policy of universal service and later the Universal Service Fund (USF) were instrumental in reaching even the most rural communities in my state with voice service.

Like universal voice was to its time, the importance of broadband to our national economy cannot be understated. I, like my colleagues who have signed the attached letter, am concerned that the NBP fails to recognize how desperately rural economies need adequate broadband for everyday commerce, telemedicine, distance learning and so much more. Unfortunately, it appears the NBP will only widen the digital divide.

I urge you to modify the NBP recommendations to consider the needs of Wyoming and rural America. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,


Cynthia M. Lummis
Member of Congress

WCB
NBP
JG 987



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

October 13, 2010

The Honorable Cynthia M. Lummis
U.S. House of Representatives
1004 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Lummis:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the effect of the National Broadband Plan's (NBP) proposed universalization level of 4 Mbps on rural America. The NBP called for a Connect America Fund to enable all U.S. households to access a network that is capable of providing both high-quality voice-grade service and broadband that satisfies the National Broadband Availability Target. Recently, the Commission's Omnibus Broadband Initiative (OBI) staff released a technical paper addressing the Target speed, which I am enclosing for your review. The OBI paper details the reasons for the 4 Mbps level and notes the importance of periodic adjustments as the data supporting the Target continues to evolve.

The 4 Mbps speed is very aggressive and represents one of the highest levels in the world today for universalization, while the NBP's 100 Mbps number is based on a long-range goal. Few residential customers today subscribe to 100 Mbps service, and 4 Mbps currently is the median speed purchased by consumers. Only 6 percent of consumers subscribe to broadband service that is faster than 10 Mbps. Broadband service at 4 Mbps permits consumers to utilize its full benefits, including web browsing, e-mail, two-way video conferencing, and watching educational lectures online in standard definition. The Target speed also is "reasonably comparable" to the broadband service currently provided in urban areas, which is the standard mandated under Section 254 of the Communications Act for universalization. Cost is also a factor that needs to be considered – subsidizing universal 100 Mbps deployment today could cost as much as \$320 billion, which could increase the size of the fund to \$40-50 billion annually, and lead to a universal service fee, on average, of \$30 per month per American household.

Be assured that I am committed to making broadband affordable and attainable by all Americans, regardless of where they live or which service providers they use. I look forward to working with you and other Members of Congress as the Commission transforms its universal service policies to ensure that there will be no digital divide in our nation. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Julius Genachowski

Enclosure